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**NCPA PARTNERS WITH CMS, SSA TO HELP LOW-INCOME BENEFICIARIES APPLY
FOR MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT**

Alexandria, Virginia - May 04, 2005 The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), which represents the nation's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 24,000 pharmacies nationwide, has partnered with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to assist low-income Medicare beneficiaries in applying for the government subsidized Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit.

CMS Administrator Mark McClellan, M.D., Ph.D., announced the community pharmacy initiative Monday at NCPA's 37th Annual Conference on National Legislation and Government Affairs in Washington, D.C.

NCPA will work with CMS and SSA to identify and assist low-income Medicare beneficiaries with the application process for the subsidized drug benefit.

"Through the leadership of NCPA and individual pharmacies and their buying groups across the country, we will be launching a community-based program to help Medicare beneficiaries apply for the extra help, using that simplified application developed through the SSA," McClellan said in his remarks at the conference. "This is a great outreach step: it is natural that at the place people have to pay for their prescriptions, and where we have the best personal knowledge about which Medicare beneficiaries really need help, that pharmacists are providing this leadership."

"Community pharmacists across the nation are already working every day with Medicare beneficiaries in their communities to help them afford their prescription medicines and to use them appropriately," said Bruce Roberts, R.Ph., NCPA executive vice president & CEO. "We are pleased to be partnering with CMS and SSA to help our low-income Medicare patients receive the assistance they need."

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) represents the nation's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 24,000 pharmacies. The nation's independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains represent an \$84 billion marketplace, dispensing nearly half of the nation's retail prescriptions.

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